

New Staff Members Join *ISDH Epidemiology Resource Center*

Twelve new epidemiologists and two support staff have recently joined the Indiana State Department of Health Epidemiology Resource Center (ERC) in an effort to meet the critical benchmarks outlined in the Cooperative Agreement on Public Health Preparedness and Response for Bioterrorism.

Eight of the epidemiologists will serve as field epidemiologists in the bioterrorism preparedness districts throughout Indiana (see map). These new employees will help local health departments detect disease natural disease outbreaks or those occurring from a bioterrorist event. Working closely with local health departments, hospitals and health care providers, the field epidemiologists can also greatly decrease response time during a public health crisis. The field epidemiologists will also assist local health departments with maintaining supplies to conduct investigations, coordinate training, and conduct routine infectious disease surveillance. Having epidemiologists in the field will also allow epidemiologists in Indianapolis to develop expertise for identifying subtle indicators of communicable diseases and to track long-term trends.

Donna Allen, a former field representative for the ISDH Immunization Program, will be stationed in Porter County in District 1. **Brad Beard**, a former field representative for the ISDH Food Protection Program, will be stationed in Allen County in District 3. **Sandy Gorsuch**, a former public health administrator for the ISDH HIV/STD Program, will be located in Tippecanoe County in District 4. **Lora Bogda**, who recently received a Master's of Public Health degree with an epidemiology concentration, will be located at ISDH in District 5. **Stephanie Jackson**, who will join the ISDH ERC on June 23, will be stationed at Delaware County in District 6. **Robert Allen**, a former immunization representative with the Marion County Health Department, will be located in either Vigo or Sullivan County and will cover Districts 7 and 10. **Steve Allen**, a former field representative for the ISDH Immunization Program, will be located in Bartholomew County in District 8. **Karen Gordon**, a former field representative for the ISDH Immunization Program, will be located in Warrick County and will cover District 9. The position located in Elkhart County and covering District 2 remains vacant.

Prior to going out to the districts, the field epidemiologists completed six full days of training, including information on various infectious disease agents, surveillance and disease reporting, outbreak investigations, laboratory testing and result interpretation, risk communication and media interviews, HIPAA, and global public health issues. Currently the field epidemiologists are making introductory visits to the local health departments within their districts. They will also be assisting local health departments to determine needs and priorities for allocation of federal grant funding recently made available.

In addition to the field epidemiologists, four other epidemiologists have joined the ISDH ERC in Indianapolis. **Shawn Richards**, a former ISDH public health investigator, was promoted as the new respiratory epidemiologist. Her responsibilities include influenza sentinel surveillance and investigation of respiratory diseases, including SARS. **Linda Jones**, formerly an infection control specialist with Clarion Health in Indianapolis, joins ISDH as the new syndromic surveillance epidemiologist. Her main responsibility will be developing and monitoring a system for tracking indicators that could suggest an outbreak, such as emergency room visits, ambulance runs, and over-the-counter drug sales, before a disease is actually diagnosed. **Dr. Mokbul Khan** joins ISDH as the new biostatistician, whose duties include advanced statistical analysis of public health data. **James Michael** will analyze the timeliness, accuracy and completeness of public health data as the new quality assurance epidemiologist.

Two new support staff will provide much needed assistance. **Trish Manuel** is the new supervisor of the support section, and **Nina Smith**, data processing operator, will manage collection and computerization of investigation and surveillance data.

ISDH Bioterrorism Preparedness Districts

District 1
4 counties
Donna Allen

District 2
8 counties
Vacant

District 3
11 counties
Brad Beard

District 4
9 counties
Sandra Gorsuch

District 5
8 counties
Lora Bogda

District 6
13 counties
Stephanie Jackson

Districts 7 and 10
15 counties
Robert Allen

District 8
13 counties
Steven Allen

District 9
11 counties
Karen Gordon

